

On behalf of the United States Congress and the people of the 11th Congressional District, I extend my sympathies to all of the family and friends of John T. Corrigan.

47TH ANNIVERSARY OF REPUBLIC
OF TUNISIA

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 20, 2003

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the Republic of Tunisia's 47th Anniversary on March 20, 2003. I invite my colleagues to join in extending our congratulations to the leaders and people of this important ally.

While Tunisia is celebrating 47 years of independence, our relationship with this country has roots much older. As early as 1797, The United States first signed a treaty of

peace and friendship with Tunisia. This first step was a portentous omen for the future.

Throughout Tunisia's brief history they have been a staunch ally to the United States and democracy at large. Whether it be their willingness to support the United States in World War II by suspending their own struggle with the French to lend aid to the allied cause, or their unwavering commitment to seeing terrorism vanquished through their membership in the U.S. led coalition against terror, it becomes evident that Tunisia's dedication to freedom and democracy is held in the highest regard by its people.

Not only is Tunisia a defender of democracy outside its borders, but within as well. Few are the nations that can boast of a more progressive attitude towards women's rights, enshrined in law, as early as 1956, The Code of Personal Status established a new organization of family based on equal rights through a series of provisions including the abolition of polygamy, and setting the minimum age of marriage at 17. In 1993, amendments were

adopted that went still further, guaranteeing alimony for divorced women and their children. Mothers were also given the explicit right to partake in the management of their children's affairs whether married or not.

Tunisia is also a country that values its heritage and culture. It is a proponent of the arts and its distinct, diverse culture. The government of this culturally rich country has passed laws that allow texts and musical instruments bound for cultural purposes to be imported tax free to stimulate interest and growth in this important sector of society. Tax breaks have also been levied towards investment in monuments from antiquity that might otherwise fall into ruin.

Tunisia is a country that has overcome many obstacles. From foreign powers to economic reform Tunisia has never shied from change while also preserving its unique and rich heritage. For this reason, and many others, I invite my colleagues to join in congratulating all Tunisians as they celebrate the 47th anniversary of their nation's independence.